

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 DODE-00 BOOK-230 (ISO) R

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 252051

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PGOV, HO

SUBJECT: PROPOSED F-86 SALE TO HONDURAS

REF: STATE 236606

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM LAZAR

1. I HAVE RECEIVED YOUR OFFICIAL-INFORMAL LETTER OF OCTOBER 31, AND I AM REPLYING BY MEANS OF THIS CABLE IN ORDER THAT YOU MIGHT FOCUS ON QUESTION BEFORE DEPARTING POST ON NOV. 16.

2. SUBSTANCE OF STATE 236606 WAS DISCUSSED IN CEN BEFORE I DEPARTED WASHINGTON ON OCT 13. ONE INTENTION BEHIND THAT MESSAGE WAS TO DETERMINE WHETHER AEROTRADE HAS A SALES CONTRACT OR AGREEMENT WITH GOH OR WHETHER THEY HOPE TO SECURE EXPORT LICENSE ON STRENGTH OF WHICH THEY WOULD MAKE SALES OFFER TO GOH. THIS QUESTION ARISES BECAUSE WE HAVE HAD NO CONTACT FROM GOH RE THIS CURRENTLY PROPOSED SALE, AND WE WOULD NOT WISH TO REVIVE THIS QUESTION WITH GOH IF AEROTRADE IS IN FACT ACTING INDEPENDENTLY AT THIS
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POINT IN TIME.

3. WITH RESPECT TO REFTTEL QUESTIONS CONCERNING IMPACT OF F-86 PURCHASES, EMPHASIS PROBABLY SHOULD BE ON PUBLIC OPINION RATHER THAN ON GOH FINANCES. THE AMOUNT OF MONEY INVOLVED IS SMALL BY ANY NATIONAL STANDARDS, BUT GOH MIGHT WANT TO WEIGH POSSIBILITY THAT ACQUISITION OF AIRCRAFT AT THIS TIME COULD WELL BE PERCEIVED BY OTHERS AS MIS-USE OF NATION'S LIMITED FINANCIAL RESOURCES DURING DISASTER RECOVERY PERIOD. WHETHER SUCH PERCEPTIONS WOULD NEGATIVELY AFFECT POSSIBILITIES OF INTERNATIONAL RECOVERY ASSISTANCE IS A JUDGEMENT THAT GOH WILL HAVE TO MAKE.

4. AS EXPRESSED TO YOU ORALLY, THE INCLINATION HERE WHEN THIS MATTER CAME UP AGAIN RECENTLY WAS THAT, GIVEN THE PURCHASE OF ISRAELI AIRCRAFT IN THE INTERIM BY EL SALVADOR, THE INITIAL RATIONALE FOR REJECTING THE LICENSE FOR THE F-86'S HAD BEEN VITIATED. HOWEVER, THE RESOUNDING FAILURE OF WHAT HAD BEEN PROMISING NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR LEADING TOWARDS A SOLUTION OF THEIR PROBLEMS NOW HAS CHANGED THIS PICTURE AGAIN. IF HONDURAS DOES, INDEED, TAKE PROBLEM TO THE OAS THE INEVITABLE STRONG SALVADORAN REACTION AND THE PROGRESSIVE DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IS ALL TOO EASY TO FORESEE. WE CANNOT SEE PLAYING A ROLE, IF ONLY BY VIRTUE OF APPROVING A SALE OF PREVIOUSLY MAP-GRANTED EQUIPMENT, IN POURING ADDITIONAL ARMS INTO THIS SORT OF A TROUBLED SITUATION, EVEN ON THE RATIONALE OF BALANCING OFF AN ADMITTED ARMS IMBALANCE RESULTING FROM NO FAULT OR ACTION OF THE USG. THUS, MY QUESTION TO YOU IS WHETHER IT WOULD BE WORTHWHILE TO TRY TO GET LOPEZ TO UNDERSTAND OUR POINT OF VIEW AND TO SEE THAT THE ONLY POSSIBLE WAY IN WHICH WE COULD APPROVE THE SALE OF F-86'S WOULD BE TO HAVE, IN HAND, TANGIBLE PROOF THAT, RATHER THAN DETERIORATING, THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION BETWEEN EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS ACTUALLY IS MOVING AHEAD IN A SATISFACTORY AND PROMISING WAY.

5. IN SUMMARY THEN, AND ASSUMING THAT THE AEROTRADE INITIATIVE REPRESENTS THE OUTCOME OF SOME PREVIOUS CONTACT BETWEEN AEROTRADE AND THE GOH, WE SEE OUR OPTIONS

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AS EITHER (1) MAINTAINING OUR PAST POSITION IN REFUSING TO GRANT PERMISSION FOR THE PROPOSED TRANSFER OF THESE AIRCRAFT FROM YUGOSLAVIA TO HONDURAS ON THE, NOW, ADMITTEDLY TENUOUS GROUND THAT WE DO NOT WISH, BY OUR ACTION, TO PARTICIPATE IN AN ARMS BUILD-UP IN THE AREA, OR (2) GETTING INVOLVED IN THE VERY DELICATE BUSINESS OF ADMITTING O LOPEZ FRANKLY WHAT OUR PROBLEM IS AND CONSULTING HIM AS TO THE LIKELIHOOD OF A POSSIBLE SOLUTION. THE LATTER

APPROACH, ADMITTEDLY, RUNS THE RISK OF BEING MISUNDERSTOOD AND FURTHERMORE IT IS NOT CLEAR THAT LOPEZ OR THE

GOH, CAN COME UP WITH ANY NEW INITIATIVES IN THIS AREA. (ALSO, WE WOULD HAVE TO AVOID STRENUOUSLY IN ANY SUCH APPROACH ANY SUGGESTION THAT WE ARE PUSHING FOR PARTICULAR OR SPECIFIC ACTION SUCH AS, E.G., REVERSING THE GOH POSITION ON THE PROPOSED BORGONOVO-BATRES AGREEMENT.) NEVERTHELESS, HOWEVER DELICATE, WE TEND TO PREFER THE LATTER ALTERNATIVE FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST, IT WOULD PUT THE BALL BACK IN THE HONDURAS' COURT WITH RESPECT TO ANY FUTURE 'KICK-BACK" (SUCH AS WE HAVE HAD IN THE PAST) ABOUT LACK OF COOPERATION ON OUR PART IN THE F-86 MATTER. SECONDLY, SHOULD THERE BE REAL PRESSURE ON LOPEZ OR THE CABINET TO PROCURE THESE F-86'S (OF WHICH WE HAVE THUS FAR SEEN NO EVIDENCE) THIS APPROACH JUST MIGHT SERVE TO GET THE HONDURAS-SALVADOR NEGOTIATIONS OFF DEAD CENTER.

6. DEPARTMENT CABLE 208003 ORIGINALLY SENT TO SANTIAGO REGARDING ANTECEDENTS OF AEROTRADE, INC. HAS BEEN SENT TO YOU SEPTEL.

7. YOUR COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS ARE REQUESTED.

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